

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR IS XF US

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON VISIT OF ISRAELI MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL

1. SUMMARY. AVINERI AND DINITZ VOICED CONCERN TO HABIB AND ATHERTON APRIL 26 ABOUT NEED FOR PLANNING FALL-BACKS IF GENEVA CANNOT BE CONVENED IN LATE 1977. THEY WERE TOLD THAT TO START TALKING NOW OF FALL-BACKS WOULD RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR SERIOUSNESS IN SEEKING OVERALL SETTLEMENT AND THAT ELEMENTS OF POSSIBLE FALL-BACK ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BECOME EVIDENT AS WE WORKED TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT.

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AVINERI STRESSED ISRAELI OPPOSITION TO INVITING PLO TO GENEVA IN ANY GUISE BECAUSE OF LEGITIMATION THIS WOULD RENDER PLO, AS WELL AS TO WEST BANK STATE UNLINKED TO JORDAN. HE ADMITTED HIS REFERENCE TO WEST BANK ENTITY OMITTED MENTION OF GAZA BECAUSE GAZA WAS VERY DIFFICULT ISSUE FOR ISRAEL. HE IMPLIED ISRAEL COULD LIVE WIT; PLO PRESENCE INSIDE JORDANIAN DELEGATION IN NEGOTIATIONS. AVINERI TRIED TO DOWN-PLAY ;MPORTANCE OF ,GOOD FENCE" IN ALLON'S FOUR POINTS RE LEBANON OUT DID NOT ANSWER DIRECTLY QUESTION ABOUT ISRAELI REACTION IF SARKIS IN FUTURE FELT

IT POLITICALLY NECESSARY TO CLOSE IT. WE POINTED OUT THAT

OFFICIAL DECISION ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT AT MES'HA WAS DEPARTURE FROM PAST ISRAELI PRACTICE AND WOULD HARDLY BE SEEN AS REFLECTING ISRAELI WILLINGNESS TO ENTER INTO PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, TO WHICH AVINERI GAVE IRRELEVANT PHILOSOPHICAL REPLY. HE GAVE NO ANSWER TO OUR STATEMENT WE ASSUMED MES'HA SIGNIFIED NEW ISRAELI TERRITORIAL CLAIM. WE REPORTED ON EILTS' REQUEST TO FAHMY THAT EGYPTIANS NOT ATTEMPT PUBLICLY TO DESCRIBE U.S. POSITIONS ON SENSITIVE ISSUES, WHICH PLEASED AVINERI AND DINITZ, AND REQUESTED THAT ISRAELIS FOLLOW SAME RULE. END SUMMARY.

2. UNDER SECRETARY HABIB MET ON APRIL 26 WITH MFA DIRGEN AVINERI FOR DISCUSSION OF ISSUES OF MUTUAL INTEREST. MEETING BEGAN AT 12:00 NOON AND CONTINUED THROUGH LUNCH. ALSO PRESENT WERE DINITZ, BAR-ON, BENTSUR, ATHERTON, SAUNDERS, QUANDT, DAY, AND VELIOTES. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF DISCUSSIONS.

3. PEACE PROCESS

4. AVINERI EXPRESSED THE ISRAELI CONCERN OVER OUR TRYING TO MOVE TOO FAST TO CONVENE A GENEVA CONFERENCE, NOTING THAT CAREFUL PREPARATION WOULD BE REQUIRED TO CONVENE THE CONFERENCE AND TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS. IN SECRET

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THIS CONNECTION, HE MENTIONED THE DESIRABILITY OF CONSIDERING A FALL-BACK SHOULD IT BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CONVENE A CONFERENCE BY THE SECOND HALF OF THIS YEAR, SUGGESTING THE CONCEPT OF A "PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE." ON PROBING, IT TURNED OUT THAT AVINERI HAD VERY LITTLE TO ADD TO THE GENERAL CONCEPT AND APPARENTLY MENTIONED IT IN THE CONTEXT OF A GENERAL CAUTION NOT TO TRY TO MOVE TOO FAST. SIMCHA DINITZ PICKED THIS UP AND SUGGESTED THE DESIRABILITY OF ISRAEL AND THE U.S. WORKING TOGETHER ON FALL-BACK PROPOSALS--E.G., AN END OF BELLIGERENCY AND LESS THAN FINAL WITHDRAWAL ON ALL FRONTS--SHOULD AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT NOT PROVE FEASIBLE, IF AND WHEN A CONFERENCE IS CONVENED. IN REPLYING, WE CLARIFIED THAT OUR HOPE FOR THE CONVENING OF A GENEVA CONFERENCE LATER THIS YEAR DID NOT MEAN THAT WE EXPECTED A FINAL SETTLEMENT TO EMERGE BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR. INDEED, WE RECOGNIZED THAT MOVING TO A FINAL, ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT WOULD REQUIRE SOME TIME. REGARDING SUBSTANCE, WE NOTED THAT ALTHOUGH WE DID NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT FALL-BACK PLANS MIGHT PROVE NECESSARY, WE BELIEVED THE BEST WAY TO PROCEED WAS TO TRY FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. IN THE PROCESS, THE ELEMENTS OF POSSIBLE FALL-BACK AGREEMENTS WOULD BECOME EVIDENT. TO START TALKING NOW OF FALL-BACKS, HOWEVER, WOULD RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW SERIOUS WE WERE IN SEEKING AN OVERALL

SETTLEMENT. IN THE END DINITZ SAID THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO KEEP THE IDEA OF A LESS AMBITIOUS FALL-BACK IN THE BACK OF OUR MINDS FOR THE CONTINGENCY THAT OVERALL SETTLEMENT EFFORTS DO NOT GET OFF THE GROUND.

5. PALESTINIANS

6. AVINERI REPEATED ISRAEL'S FAMILIAR POSITION OF BEING AGAINST THE PARTICIPATION OF AN INDEPENDENT PLO DELEGATION IN GENEVA. IN THIS RESPECT, HE NOTED THAT ISRAEL WAS OPPOSED TO THE EXTENSION OF AN INVITATION TO THE PLO TO
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PARTICIPATE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES (PRESUMABLY EVEN IF IT WERE CERTAIN THE PLO WOULD REQUEST IT), SINCE THIS ACT WOULD "LEGITIMIZE" THE ORGANIZATION. THE PREVIOUS EVENING AVINERI HAD DEVOTED HIS ENTIRE ADDRESS TO AIPAC TO THE ISRAELI VIEW OF THE PALESTINIAN SITUATION. HIS MAJOR THEME WAS THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT ACCEPT AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK, NOTING THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION WAS TO LINK THE WEST BANK TO JORDAN. AT ONE POINT IN HIS PRESENTATION, HE USED THE PHRASE "PALESTINIAN ENTITY ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA" AND QUICKLY CORRECTED HIMSELF BY DROPPING GAZA. HIS ONLY OTHER MENTION OF GAZA WAS TO NOTE THAT IT CONTAINED 250,000 PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN CAMPS, WHO WERE AMONG THOSE TO BE ABSORBED IN A WEST BANK/JORDAN STATE. WHEN WE QUERIED AVINERI AS TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FORMULATION USED IN HIS SPEECH, HE ADMITTED THAT HE AVOIDED INCLUDING ANY REFERENCES TO GAZA AS PART OF A TERRITORIAL SOLUTION CONCERNING THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE IN ORDER NOT TO "GET INTO HOT WATER." HE NOTED THAT GAZA WAS STILL A "VERY DIFFICULT ISSUE" FOR ISRAEL.

7. WE ALSO ASKED AVINERI ABOUT THE POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON IN A RECENT INTERVIEW WITH THE FRENCH PRESS CONCERNING PLO REPRESENTATION IN A JORDANIAN DELEGATION. AVINERI CONFIRMED ALLON'S REPORTED REMARKS THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT "CHECK THE CREDENTIALS" OF SUCH PALESTINIANS, NOTING THAT THIS WAS INDEED A NUANCE OF CHANGE IN ISRAELI POLICY.

8. SOVIET FACTOR

9. WE HAD A LONG DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE SOVIET MOTIVES AND OPTIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WE AGREED THAT THE SOVIETS INDEED WERE ANXIOUS TO GET BACK INTO THE MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATING GAME AND, THEREFORE, WERE QUITE ANXIOUS FOR GENEVA TO RECONVENE. WE CAME TO NO CONCLUSIONS AS TO WHETHER THE
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SOVIETS HAD DECIDED THAT A PEACE SETTLEMENT WAS IN THEIR

INTEREST OR IF THEY WERE ONLY INTERESTED IN PLAYING A SPOILER'S ROLE. AVINERI ALSO COMMENTED THAT, AS PART OF THE CURRENT SOVIET CAMPAIGN, THE SOVIETS WERE "ACTING AS THOUGH THEY WERE SPEAKING TO ISRAEL," WHILE IN REALITY VERY LITTLE IF ANY DIALOGUE WAS TAKING PLACE.

10. SOUTHERN LEBANON

11. WE TOLD AVINERI THAT, THANKS TO ALL CONCERNED, THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON HAD QUIETED DOWN, AND WE GAVE ISRAEL FULL MARKS FOR ITS HELP IN ACHIEVING THE CURRENTLY STABILIZED SITUATION. IN THIS CONTEXT, WE HAD NOTED ALLON'S "FOUR POINTS" WITH INTEREST AND WISHED TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES THAT ISRAEL'S APPARENT INSISTENCE ON THE NONINTERFERENCE WITH THE "GOOD FENCE" COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS AT SOME FUTURE TIME, SHOULD SARKIS BE IN A POSITION TO EXTEND HIS GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY OVER THE SOUTH AND FEEL IT POLITICALLY NECESSARY TO CLOSE THE BORDER ON THE LEBANESE SIDE. OBVIOUSLY, AN ISRAELI REFUSAL TO ACCEDE TO A POSSIBLE LEBANESE REQUEST FOR CLOSING THE "GOOD FENCE"--WITH ALL OF ITS VISIBILITY--COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR SARKIS IN BEIRUT. AVINERI NOTED THAT THE "FOUR POINTS" WERE AIMED AT THE PALESTINIANS IN THE SOUTH AND THE SYRIANS AND WERE DESIGNED TO PUT THEM ON NOTICE THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT TOLERATE ITS CHRISTIAN ALLIES BEING WIPE OUT. HE THOUGHT THE MESSAGE HAD BEEN RECEIVED AND THAT THIS MADE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE CURRENT STABILIZED SITUATION. HE WAS EQUIVOCAL IN HIS RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION WE HAD POSED, HOWEVER, LEAVING THE SUGGESTION THAT ISRAEL REGARDED THE "GOOD FENCE" PER SE AS AN IMPORTANT FORM OF REASSURANCE TO ITS CHRISTIAN FRIENDS IN THE SOUTH.

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13. WE TOOK THE OCCASION TO RAISE WITH AVINERI THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED, OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED SETTLEMENT IN THE WEST BANK AT MES'HA NEAR THE ISRAELI BORDER NOT FAR FROM TEL AVIV. WE POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS CLEARLY A DEPARTURE FROM PREVIOUS ISRAELI SETTLEMENT PRACTICES AND NOT EVEN WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF THE SO-CALLED ALLON PLAN, WHICH PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON SETTLEMENTS FOR SECURITY PURPOSES IN THE JORDAN VALLEY. WE ADDED THAT SUCH A NEW SETTLEMENT WOULD HARDLY BE SEEN IN AMMAN AS REFLECTING AN ISRAELI WILLINGNESS TO ENTER INTO PEACE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IN REPLY, AVINERI PRESENTED US WITH AN HISTORICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL DISSERTATION ON THE ROLE OF

SETTLEMENTS SINCE THE 1967 WAR, WHICH WAS INTERESTING BUT
LARGELY IRRELEVANT. WHEN HE FINISHED, WE SAID WE ASSUMED

THAT ISRAEL WAS STAKING OUT A NEW CLAIM TO TERRITORY.
THERE WAS NO REPLY. (WE INTERPRET OUR EXCHANGE WITH
AVINERI AS CONFIRMING TEL AVIV 2842.)

14. MUBARAK AND FAHMY STATEMENTS

15. WE TOLD DINITZ THAT, IN RESPONSE TO HIS DEMARCHE,
HERMANN EILTS HAD SEEN FAHMY ABOUT HIS AND VICE PRESIDENT
MUBARAK'S REMARKS TO THE PRESS, WHICH ERRONEOUSLY CHARAC-
TERIZED OUR POSITION AS BEING ONE OF SUPPORT FOR AN INDE-
PENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. FAHMY
ACCEPTED OUR ADMONITION THAT IT WOULD BE BEST IN THE FUTURE
IF EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS DID NOT ATTEMPT PUBLICLY TO DESCRIBE
AMERICAN POSITIONS ON SUCH SENSITIVE ISSUES. DINITZ WAS
PLEASED TO HEAR THAT WE HAD FOLLOWED THROUGH ON HIS
REQUEST. WE ALSO TOOK THE OCCASION TO REQUEST OUR ISRAELI
FRIENDS SIMILARLY TO REFRAIN FROM SUCH PRACTICES. WE
TRUST DINITZ WILL REPORT BOTH SIDES OF THIS PARTICULAR
COIN TO JERUSALEM.
CHRISTOPHER

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